

REMARKS FOR 4/3/13 NJ AFCC ANNUAL MEETING  
ACCEPTING PHIL N. SOBEL AWARD

Let us remember... and let us look forward!

May 27-May 30, 1998...

I attended my very first international meeting of the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (AFCC) in Washington, D.C. There was a new member special rate for the conference.

At a fall meeting of the New Jersey Psychological Association Forensic Committee, I reported that I was incredibly energized by the quality of the AFCC presentations, the interdisciplinary and international aspects of the organization, and my first of what has become many exposures to the hilarious political satire group, the Capitol Steps. Phil really loved that group at the 2007 Washington conference.

I remember presenting to the Forensic Committee in 1998 a synopsis of the conference, and my "Top Ten list" of reasons to participate in AFCC.

My number one reason turned out to be "The State of New Jersey needs to participate formally in the AFCC organization. The possibility of starting an AFCC chapter in New Jersey, which will include judges, attorneys, mental health professionals, mediators, and others, should be explored. A New Jersey chapter could be the focal point for the kinds of legal and legislative reform we are seeking and for the development and implementation of a full spectrum of alternative dispute resolution techniques in the State of New Jersey."

On October 7, 1998, there was an exploratory meeting at the Institute for Continuing Legal Education (ICLE), after the conclusion of a seminar there. We kept track, on an easel, of our brainstorming regarding the formation of a state chapter.

Yes, many of you here tonight, and all of those who later became chapter presidents, including our beloved Phil Sobel, were there at that meeting. His spirit, and his dream of helping litigants collaborate and resolve conflict, without even going to court, has been so critical to our growth and identity.

On November 21, 1998, we had our first organizational meeting, and a steering committee was formed. We had a series of meetings at ICLE and one at a local library, usually eating stale but expensive bagels, and continuing to brainstorm. Then we began to meet regularly in Phil's office, and those meetings continued until his untimely death last year.

By February, 1999, we had sent to AFCC International (the "Parent Organization") our letter of intent, and on February 14, 1999, the AFCC Executive Board unanimously voted to grant our chapter provisional status. Our chapter Executive Board first met in March, 2000. We had our first chapter program in April, 2000, at ICLE. We approved our first set of by-laws and elected our first slate of officers in June, 2000.

Re: NJ-AFCC Phil Sobel award, April 3, 2013

On September 14, 2001, we were to receive our chapter charter in New York City at an AFCC Regional Conference. But, as you recall, the 9/11 horror postponed that joyous experience for several more months.

We did receive our chapter charter on March 18, 2002, at the New Yorker Hotel, at a regional conference luncheon.

Please be certain to look at some of our chapter memorabilia, including our tribute to Phil, which are displayed on the table in this room.

As we fast forward to the present, we celebrate our vitality and increasing strength as an AFCC state chapter. The numbers in this room, and the quality and diversity of the professionals in New Jersey who seek to advance the AFCC mission speak for themselves.

We appreciate our Past Presidents Barbara, Frank, Sharon, and most especially Phil, each for their unique contributions to NJ-AFCC and the AFCC Parent Organization. Phil has guided us and inspired us in so many ways from our very beginning. Our deep gratitude to Judge Ellen Koblitz for her remarkable assistance over the years.

My warmest regards to Esther Sobel, her daughter Kirsten, and her son-in-law Jonathan for demonstrating by their presence their love for Phil and their support of our mission. My love to my wife Arlene and my son Andy, who are here tonight, and my son Harvey, and my sister Ina who are listening in, thanks to modern technology.

A special long-distance greeting to my close friend Herb Kroon, a Minnesota attorney, whom I had the pleasure of meeting and rooming with at the AFCC conference in Chicago in 2001, and who was there for us in 2002 when we received our charter. I still correspond with Herb about once a week and look forward to seeing him in LA in June.

May NJ-AFCC go from strength to strength. My best wishes to President-Elect Ann Scucci Ordway and each and every chapter leader and member for an outstanding year. You, our members, will take us to the next level.

Thank you all for this award, which I will deeply cherish and which I dedicate to the New Jersey chapter of AFCC.